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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky passed comprehensive and controversial legislation designed to change the nature of public education throughout Kentucky. Because implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act depends on public support at both the state and local levels, it is important to know whether support for KERA is being sustained. This paper summarizes findings from a series of surveys that were conducted to identify the public's attitudes and expectations regarding KERA. A series of statewide polls were conducted from spring 1990 to fall 1992. Approximately 650 Kentucky residents were interviewed by telephone for each poll, with an average 63 percent response rate. Survey results suggest that most Kentucky residents want KERA to succeed and are willing to provide the necessary resources. The amount of awareness of KERA is increasing over time. At the same time, however, some skepticism has existed throughout the period following the enactment of KERA legislation, and responses suggest that the degree of skepticism and uncertainty may be increasing. Skepticism is particularly common among respondents with low levels of education and income and among those who feel pessimistic about changes in their personal finances. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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# The Kentucky Education Reform Act and the Public: A Study of Attitudes During KERA's First Three Years

**UKERA #0002**

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## Institute on Education Reform
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# The Kentucky Education Reform Act and the Public: A Study of Attitudes During KERA's First Three Years

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This is a revised and updated version of "Public Attitudes toward the Kentucky Educational Reform Act," CDC Development Paper #27, The Center for Developmental Change, University of Kentucky, September, 1992.

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## PREFACE

In order for KERA to succeed in its goals of creating a more equitable educational system, improving the quality of education in Kentucky, and increasing the overall achievement of Kentucky's youth, many factors must work together toward that end. The first paper of the UKERA Occasional Paper Series addressed one of those factors - sound instructional practice. In particular, it dealt with instructional practices in the area of literacy education. In this second paper of the series, another important factor in the success of KERA is the focus of discussion - the public's opinion and support of the reforms. Since KERA is funded to a large extent through an increase in taxes, the continuation of the reform effort is contingent on the continued support of Kentucky's citizens.

This paper, "The Kentucky Education Reform Act and the Public: A Study of Attitudes During KERA's First Three Years", reports the results of interviews with a large sample of randomly selected Kentucky residents. The data suggest residents' familiarity with various aspects of KERA and their attitudes toward these aspects of the reforms. As such, these data suggest to educators which parts of KERA are unclear, unknown, or unsupported by significant portions of the general public and which parts are widely supported. This in turn may suggest which aspects of the reforms represent the foundation of support for KERA and what aspects citizens need more information about in order to feel even more favorable toward KERA. Thus, it is clear that educators across the Commonwealth could benefit from being familiar with this document. We hope you enjoy this paper.

Connie Bridge
Director
Institute on Education Reform


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## HIGHLIGHTS

Interviews conducted over a three-year period with randomly selected residents of Kentucky showed that:

- More than half of Kentucky residents approve of KERA, but the level of support was showing signs of decline in 1992.
- Kentucky residents are increasingly familiar with the KERA mandate that grade-level designations be eliminated for children in kindergarten through third grade, and about 40 percent believe that schools will be improved because of the change.
- Almost two-thirds of Kentucky residents believe that their local school systems will make good use of any extra money that they receive because of KERA. However, smaller proportions approve of the changes in sales and income taxes that were passed by the 1990 General Assembly.
- Most Kentucky residents consider the simultaneous pursuit of goals relating to equal educational opportunity and increased quality of student performance to be realistic. If only one goal had to be chosen, most favor equal educational opportunity.
- More than two-thirds of Kentucky residents believe that KERA will increase students' competitiveness in the job market.
- Two-thirds of Kentucky residents believe that school-based councils will lead to improved decisions.
- Majorities of respondents approve of the specific arrangements associated with the financing of KERA and favor continuing support even during recessionary periods.
- Three-fourths of the respondents who are familiar with changed testing procedures associated with KERA support them, but many are concerned that students will be tested too often.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky passed far-reaching and controversial legislation designed to change the nature of public education throughout Kentucky. The original impetus for the legislation was a court ruling that the public financing of education was unconstitutionally biased in favor of wealthier school districts. In addition to creating a more nearly equal distribution of funds, the General Assembly, acting with the encouragement of a number of individuals and groups, also attempted to create a system that would improve the quality of education for all students in Kentucky. It was hoped that graduates of Kentucky's schools would be more competitive in the job market as a result of the changes.

The new system of education is being financed to an important extent by increased sales taxes as well as changes in income taxes. This financing, of course, has generated some opposition and controversy. Other controversial aspects of the legislation have included a change in the governance of local schools (involving councils that are empowered to make decisions that once were the prerogative of principals in most schools), changes and increased frequency of achievement testing of students, direct connections between students' test results and the financial resources being made available to local school systems, and the introduction of a new appointive office (Commissioner of Education) that has been given the power once held by the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction as well as new responsibilities reflecting the KERA legislation.

Not surprisingly, such changes have generated controversy and discussion on both state and local levels. KERA has many vocal and enthusiastic proponents, but one state legislator who was instrumental in the passage and implementation of the KERA legislation was defeated in the Spring 1992 primary election on the basis of what many believe to be local backlash against increased state involvement as well as other provisions and practices associated with KERA. As a result of these controversies, it is important to monitor public opinions regarding KERA. Because KERA's implementation ultimately depends on public support at both the state and local levels, it is important to know whether support for KERA is being sustained following the initial enthusiasm associated with the 1990 legislation, whether headline-generating controversies are reflective of the thinking of the general public, and whether specific provisions of KERA and its financing are viewed as beneficial or problematic by the general public. This

report summarizes evidence from surveys conducted to provide an indication of the public's attitudes and expectations regarding KERA.

## SOURCE OF DATA

Data in this report are based on questions included on the Kentucky Survey, a series of statewide polls conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Kentucky. Kentucky Surveys include questions on a variety of public policy issues as well as sociodemographic and household characteristics of the respondents. Questions on KERA were initially added upon the recommendation of a faculty advisory committee that periodically reviews the Kentucky Survey's recurring questions. In Spring 1992, additional questions were developed by the authors of this report with special funding from the University of Kentucky KERA Task Force. A few selected KERA items were repeated on the Fall 1992 survey.

Respondents for the Kentucky Survey are selected at random (using a random digit dialing procedure that gives every residential telephone line in Kentucky an equal probability of being called) from the noninstitutionalized adult population of Kentucky. They are interviewed via telephone by trained and supervised interviewers who are employees of the Survey Research Center. A minimum of 625 respondents are interviewed for each Kentucky Survey, resulting in a margin of error of 4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval.

The number of respondents and response rates for each of the surveys included in this report are as follows:

| | Respondents | Response Rate |
|---|---|---|
| Spring 1990 | 640 | 65% |
| Fall 1990 | 660 | 62 |
| Spring 1991 | 646 | 60 |
| Fall 1991 | 650 | 59 |
| Spring 1992 | 664 | 65 |
| Fall 1992 | 647 | 66 |

Response rates are calculated by dividing completions by the number of calls made to eligible households. Typically, about two-thirds of the noncompletions stem from refusals to begin or to complete the interview, and about one-third are not completed because of deafness, illness, or unavailability due to travel or other commitments.

As is true with any methodology, a survey has limitations. Questions must be sufficiently brief that they can be administered over the phone, so some complexities and subtleties may be missed. A telephone survey will, by definition, exclude residents of households without telephones. However, the random respondent selection, standardized phrasing, and controlled interviewing conditions of the Survey Research Center provide a basis for obtaining views of public opinion that are more nearly representative of those found in the general population than can be obtained from public hearings, publicized complaints, letters to the editor, or alternative sources of information on public opinions and perceptions.

## THE STABILITY OF SUPPORT FOR KERA

### General Views of KERA

Table 1, which summarizes responses to questions asked for the first time on the Spring 1990 survey (shortly after the KERA legislation passed) and repeated on at least one of the more recent surveys, shows that support for KERA and some of its provisions is extensive but hardly unanimous. On each of the surveys, more than half of the respondents have given KERA their general approval. In Spring, 1992, however, support began showing some signs of decline. For the first time, the percentage of respondents indicating that they approved of KERA (either strongly or somewhat) fell below 60 percent. This change reflected increases in both the percentage saying they disapproved of KERA and the percentage saying they did not know whether they approved. Results from Fall 1992 are not significantly different from those obtained in the spring, but the results suggest that another modest drop in approval may have occurred. This time, the drop appears to reflect an increasing proportion of respondents who do not know whether they approve of KERA. It is possible that some local controversies regarding KERA and its implementation began to create some confusion in 1992.

In Spring 1992, support was strongest among those who considered their personal finances to be improving and those who had favorable views of the quality of public schools in their area.[1] Perceived quality of public schools was not measured in Fall 1992, but perceived improvements in personal finances continued to predict support for KERA in the fall.

Regional differences in approval of KERA existed as well, but they were not consistent between the fall and the spring surveys. In Spring 1992, approval of KERA was widespread in Central Kentucky and the Louisville area, somewhat less widespread in Appalachian counties and Western Kentucky, and less common in Northern Kentucky. Between spring and fall, support appears to have increased in Northern Kentucky and decreased in Central Kentucky while remaining reasonably stable in the other regions. One can only speculate as to why these changes occurred, but it is possible that extensive press coverage of problems in specific school districts may have affected general support for KERA among some Central Kentucky residents. Among those who expressed an opinion, the percentages saying they approved of KERA in each region were:

| | Spring 1992 | Fall 1992 |
|---|---|---|
| Central Kentucky | 81.8 | 71.0 |
| Louisville Area | 76.8 | 77.4 |
| Appalachia | 71.2 | 73.6 |
| Western Kentucky | 69.6 | 72.4 |
| Northern Kentucky | 59.7 | 76.4 |

One possible reason for declining support would be a belief that KERA will make little real difference in local schools, but this apparently is not the case. In Spring, 1990, almost half of the respondents said that KERA would affect local schools either a great deal or a fair amount. Not surprisingly, almost one-fourth did not know whether KERA would have an effect on local schools. When the question was repeated in Spring, 1992, almost two-thirds of the respondents said that KERA would affect local schools either a great deal or a fair amount. Kentucky residents who are most likely to believe that effects will occur have completed at least some college-level work, have moderate to high incomes, and have a favorable impression of the quality of their local schools.

Elimination of Grade-Level Designations

One specific change associated with KERA is the elimination of grade-level designations for children in kindergarten through third grade. Table 1 shows that awareness of this provision increased appreciably between Spring 1990 and Spring 1992. Among those who were aware of the elimination of grade-level designations, about 40 percent in both surveys believed that schools will be better as a result, and the proportion believing that schools will be worse because of the change decreased by about half. In contrast, those saying that schools will be no different because of the change doubled over the two year period. The belief that non-graded primaries will lead to better schools was especially prevalent among respondents with optimistic views of personal and state finances, higher income levels, and favorable views of local school quality. In addition, those with children in public schools were more likely than others to believe that nongraded primaries will have a favorable effect on education.

Financing of KERA

Throughout the period following the passage of KERA, Kentucky residents have tended to have confidence that their local school systems will make good use of any extra money that they receive. The Fall 1992 results (with 60 percent of the respondents expressing a great deal or some confidence, 30 percent expressing only a little or no confidence, and 10 percent saying "don't know") are not atypical of the results obtained during the entire survey period. Crosstabulations for the Spring 1992 and Fall 1992 results indicated that those with optimistic views of state and personal finances are especially likely to believe that schools will make good use of the additional funds. In Spring 1992, respondents with children in public schools and favorable views of the quality of local schools were found to be relatively likely to assume that funds would be put to good use. (Neither of these variables was included in the Fall 1992 survey.) In Fall 1992 but not Spring 1992, high family income was related to the assumption that funds would be put to good use. While the Fall and Spring 1992 surveys did not produce identical relationships, their combined results appear to suggest that Kentucky residents who have few personal financial concerns and who have favorable personal experiences with local schools are likely to believe that increased investments in local schools will yield benefits.

Smaller proportions of respondents have been supportive of the specific tax measures passed to support KERA. In Spring 1990, almost sixty percent approved of the increase in the sales tax, but this approval level dropped to 42 percent by the following fall. By Spring 1992, a small majority (51 percent) once again approved of the sales tax increase. In each of the surveys containing a question on changes in both sales tax and income tax, smaller proportions approved of the change in the income tax. The Spring 1992 results (34 percent approve; 54 percent disapprove; 12 percent don't know) are the most favorable obtained so far. (The questions on taxes were not asked in Fall 1992.) One would expect the exercise of completing and filing income tax returns to lead to negative feelings about any type of income tax. The increased acceptance of the income tax changes in Spring 1992 (on a survey administered shortly after tax returns were due) may therefore be an indication of increasing acceptance.

Changes in the sales and income tax tend to be viewed more favorably by Kentucky residents with more education, more optimistic views of their personal finances, and more favorable evaluations of local schools. Higher income respondents tend to favor the increased sales tax, but the relationship between income and evaluations of the new income tax is less straightforward. Although their average levels of approval of the sales tax differed very little, men and women had different overall evaluations of the increased sales tax. Men were more likely than women to express both strong approval and strong disapproval for the measure.

## ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF KERA

The Spring 1992 Kentucky Survey provided an opportunity to ask additional questions designed to draw on the developing public debate about KERA within Kentucky and educational reform on the national level. Results for these questions (a few of which were repeated in Fall 1992) are summarized in Table 2.

### Goals of KERA

The court ruling that originally led to the development of KERA stressed the need for equality of educational opportunity through equalized funding. However, policy makers quickly added quality considerations to those stressing equality. Policy experts disagree about the feasibility of pursuing these

two goals simultaneously, but Table 2 shows that two-thirds of the respondents surveyed in Spring 1992 considered the simultaneous pursuit of the two goals realistic. At the same time, most considered equal educational opportunity the more important of the two goals. Equality was particularly likely to be chosen over quality by residents of rural areas, respondents with lower levels of education and income, and women.

Economic Impacts of KERA

In Spring 1992, most respondents were optimistic about the economic impacts of KERA. More than two-thirds said that Kentucky students would become more competitive in the job market as a result of the KERA reforms (Table 2). This belief was especially likely to be expressed by those with optimistic views of their personal finances and those who considered schools in the locality to either good or fair. Possibly because they viewed their local schools as already producing graduates who would be competitive on the job market, those who considered local schools to be excellent were somewhat less likely than those who considered them good or fair to see a link between KERA and job market competitiveness. Those who viewed local schools as poor were least likely to believe that KERA would have a positive impact on competitiveness in the job market.

Local Governance

About two-thirds of the Spring 1992 respondents were optimistic about the implications of changed decision making procedures at the local level. Sixty-six percent said that the new councils mandated by KERA will lead to better decisions than did the old system in which most decisions were made by principals. The remaining respondents were more likely to say that the councils would make no difference than that they would lead to worse decisions. Optimism about the effects of school councils was most common among respondents who had completed at least some college-level work.

Finance Issues

A majority of the respondents polled in Spring 1992 approved of the arrangements to finance KERA and believed that they should continue even during periods of financial difficulty for the state.

Despite disapproval from one-third of the respondents, well over half approved of the arrangements whereby higher income districts receive smaller increases in state appropriations than lower income districts. Thus, the idea of equalization was endorsed even when it was made clear that this entails costs for certain districts. Residents of counties outside metropolitan areas were particularly likely to endorse equalization, but it also was approved by more than half of the metropolitan area residents.

Almost sixty percent of the respondents opposed suspending KERA reforms during an economic recession, and a similar percentage was willing to reduce funds given to higher education for the sake of elementary and secondary education. Opposition to suspending reforms during recession was especially pronounced among Louisville area residents and those with optimistic views of their personal finances. College graduates were least likely to support the idea of reducing higher education funding to support elementary and secondary education.

A potentially controversial aspect of KERA involves tying financing to student performance. More than forty percent of the respondents believed that tying financial rewards and punishments to students' performance will lead to better schools. At the same time, almost twenty percent said this arrangement will lead to worse schools. Those with children in public schools were relatively likely to believe that schools will be improved by the system of financial rewards and punishments.

## Testing

Many respondents were not familiar with the provisions of KERA that altered the amount, cost, and type of statewide testing, but the extent of familiarity increased from 25 percent to 33 percent between Spring and Fall, 1992. Of those familiar with the changes, three-fourths were in favor of them in both survey periods, and about 60 percent believed the changes represent an appropriate amount of testing. At the same time, almost 30 percent in the spring (but only 24 percent in the fall) believed the change represents too much testing. Only about ten percent believed it represents too little testing. It would appear that significant numbers of informed citizens will be watching to see whether an inappropriate amount of energy is devoted to testing programs.

The Spring and Fall 1992 surveys have produced evidence of somewhat different predictors of attitudes about testing. In the spring, respondents with more education were relatively likely to support

the statewide testing program, but more educated respondents also were likely to be concerned that annual tests represent too much testing. Respondents with higher incomes and those who considered local schools to be excellent also tended to share this concern. In the fall, city residents were less likely than residents of other localities to consider the amount of testing appropriate. City residents, along with farm residents, were more likely than residents of small towns, suburbs, or rural non-farm areas to consider the amount of testing to be excessive. At the same time, city residents were more likely than others to believe that too little testing was being required.

## CONCLUSION

The Kentucky Education Reform Act was passed in an atmosphere of excitement, optimism, and national attention. Survey results over a three-year period suggest that most Kentucky residents want KERA to succeed and are willing to provide the necessary resources. The amount of awareness of KERA is increasing over time. At the same time, some skepticism has existed throughout the period following the enactment of the KERA legislation, and responses to a question measuring general approval of KERA (Table 1) suggest that the degree of skepticism and uncertainty may be increasing over time. Skepticism is particularly common among respondents with low levels of education and income and feelings of pessimism about changes in their personal finances. These categories include many of the very people that KERA was designed to help. It appears important to continue monitoring public perceptions of KERA, to remain alert to opportunities to explain KERA and its rationale to those who are not yet convinced of the wisdom of the legislation, to be willing to modify its implementation as experience is gained, and to administer it in such a way that public education remains above suspicion at the local and state levels.

## NOTE

[1]Differing responses between categories of respondents are reported if tests for statistical significance (Chi-square, Kendall's tau-b, or Kendall's tau-c, as appropriate) indicate that an observed difference was not likely to have occurred by chance. In most cases, the 5 percent level of statistical significance (indicating that the probability that an observed relationship occurred by chance is less than 5 percent) is used. Regional differences in general approval of KERA did not reach this level of significance, but they are reported because of the potential policy implications of the observed differences. Reported crosstabulations are based on the Spring 1992 and Fall 1992 surveys. Respondents who answered "don't know" are not included in crosstabulations. Complete crosstabulations are not included in this report but are available on request.

## MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

Attitudes and Perceptions of KERA

Questions about KERA are repeated in Tables 1 and 2.

Predictor Variables

1. Region; and
2. Metropolitan Area

   Could you tell me what county you are currently living in?

   (Counties were combined into geographically defined regions. The Appalachian region consists of counties designated as "Appalachian" by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Other regions were defined by Survey Research Center staff based on contiguity, ties to urban centers, and transportation arteries. Counties were classified as metropolitan or nonmetropolitan based on classifications by the United States Bureau of the Census.)

3. Place of Residence

   Would you call the community in which you live a rural area, a small town, a suburb, or a city of 50,000 or more?

4. Education

   What was the last grade in school you completed?

5. Personal Financial Condition

   We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?

   IF BETTER OFF: Would you say you are much better off or somewhat better off?

   IF WORSE OFF: Would you say you are much worse off or somewhat worse off?

6. State Economic Conditions

What about economic conditions in the state? Would you say that over the past year economic conditions in the state have gotten better or worse?

IF BETTER OFF: Would you say much better or somewhat better?

IF WORSE OFF: Would you say much worse or somewhat worse?

7. Perceived Quality of Local Schools

What is your overall assessment of the quality of the education provided in the public schools in your school district? Would you say that they provide an excellent, good, fair, or poor education to the children in your district?

8. Children in Public School

Do you currently have children 18 years old or younger who are attending public or private schools in Kentucky?

IF YES: Is that public or private school?

9. Income

Last year, what was your total family income before taxes?

Under $5,000
$ 5 - 10,000
$10 - 15,000
$15 - 20,000
$20 - 25,000
$25 - 30,000
$30 - 40,000
$40 - 50,000
Over $50,000

10. Gender: recorded by interviewer at conclusion of interview.

## TABLE 1. Change and Stability in Views of KERA -- 1990 - 1992

Would you say you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, also known as KERA, which was designed to change the education system in the state?*

| | Percentages | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Fall90 | Spr91 | Fall91 | Spr 92 | Fall92 |
| Strongly approve | 18.3 | 28.4 | 21.4 | 29.7 | 20.2 | 18.9 |
| Somewhat approve | 43.6 | 37.7 | 40.8 | 32.9 | 33.4 | 32.2 |
| Somewhat disapprove | 7.7 | 9.3 | 9.9 | 7.5 | 11.0 | 9.9 |
| Strongly disapprove | 5.0 | 7.4 | 3.6 | 8.6 | 9.2 | 8.2 |
| Don't know | 25.4 | 17.2 | 24.2 | 21.2 | 26.2 | 30.6 |

How much do you think the new law will ultimately affect the schools in the community where you live?*

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Spr92 |
| Great deal | 18.2 | 23.4 |
| Fair amount | 29.4 | 40.7 |
| Only a little | 23.2 | 20.5 |
| Not at all | 5.7 | 4.5 |
| Don't know | 23.5 | 10.9 |

Have you heard about the provisions of KERA that will eliminate grade-level designations for children in kindergarten through third grade?**

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Spr92 |
| Yes | 31.1 | 44.6 |
| No | 65.4 | 49.1 |
| Don't know | 3.4 | 6.3 |

IF YES: Do you think this idea will lead to better or worse educational experiences for children at this level, or won't it make any difference?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Spr92 |
| Better | 43.7 | 38.9 |
| No difference | 16.2 | 36.5 |
| Worse | 22.8 | 11.5 |
| Don't know | 17.3 | 13.2 |

The new law is expected to lead to more money for many school systems. How much confidence do you have in the ability of your local school system to make good use of the money it receives? Would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, only a little confidence, or no confidence at all?

| | Percentages | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Fall90 | Spr91 | Fall91 | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| A great deal | 26.0 | 27.4 | 25.4 | 25.5 | 26.1 | 22.3 |
| Some confidence | 34.6 | 33.2 | 40.7 | 37.4 | 35.5 | 37.7 |
| Only a little | 23.4 | 25.6 | 21.5 | 21.8 | 22.4 | 21.9 |
| No confidence at all | 8.2 | 10.0 | 6.0 | 10.0 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| Don't know | 7.8 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 5.2 | 7.5 | 10.1 |

As you may know, some changes were made in Kentucky taxes during the 1990 Legislative session. For example, the state sales tax was increased from 5 to 6 percent. Do you approve or disapprove of this increase?

| | Percentages | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Fall90 | Spr91 | Fall91 | Spr92 |
| Strongly approve | 18.1 | 13.6 | 11.2 | 11.5 | 14.0 |
| Somewhat approve | 38.7 | 28.5 | 34.0 | 28.5 | 36.6 |
| Somewhat disapprove | 15.4 | 17.6 | 20.8 | 16.5 | 16.9 |
| Strongly disapprove | 24.6 | 37.7 | 31.5 | 39.4 | 29.1 |
| Don't know | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 4.2 | 3.5 |

Kentucky income taxes are being changed to increase revenue. While not all Kentuckians will pay higher income taxes, many will pay more because of the change. Do you approve or disapprove of the change in Kentucky's income tax?

| | Percentages | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spr90 | Fall90 | Spr91 | Spr92 |
| Strongly approve | 3.9 | 4.9 | 5.9 | 8.0 |
| Somewhat approve | 21.6 | 20.4 | 24.7 | 26.2 |
| Somewhat disapprove | 24.0 | 21.6 | 26.6 | 21.8 |
| Strongly disapprove | 35.6 | 42.6 | 33.4 | 32.1 |
| Don't know | 14.8 | 10.5 | 9.5 | 11.9 |

*Minor changes in wording have occurred between some survey administrations. Wording shown is that used in the most recent survey.

**This question was asked of all respondents in Spring 1992. To allow comparison, results are reported only for those who reported familiarity with the elimination of grade-level designations.

## TABLE 2. Responses to KERA Questions Introduced in 1992

KERA has two basic goals: to provide equal educational opportunities for each child, and to expect each child in Kentucky to perform at a high level. Do you think it is possible to achieve both of these goals at the same time?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Yes | 65.4 | |
| No | 22.4 | |
| Don't know | 12.2 | |

If only one of these goals had to be chosen, which one would you consider most important?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Equal educational opportunities | 66.7 | |
| High performance by each child | 25.2 | |
| Don't know | 8.1 | |

Do you think that the KERA reforms will ultimately make Kentucky students more competitive in the job market?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Yes | 69.3 | |
| No | 17.3 | |
| Don't know | 13.4 | |

Under KERA, decisions in schools can now be made by councils that include the principal, teachers, and parents of the students. Before KERA, principals were able to make most important decisions on their own. Do you think that this new system will lead to:

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Better decisions | 66.1 | |
| No difference | 16.1 | |
| Worse decisions | 7.2 | |
| Don't know | 10.5 | |

The new funding in KERA provides money so that expenditures in Kentucky are more equal from school to school. In other words, higher income districts receive smaller increases in state appropriations than lower income districts. Do you think this is appropriate?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Yes | 55.6 | |
| No | 35.2 | |
| Don't know | 9.2 | |

Should any of the reforms in the KERA legislation be suspended while Kentucky is in an economic recession?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Yes | 20.8 | |
| No | 58.8 | |
| Don't know | 20.4 | |

Would you favor or oppose a reduction in funds given to higer education supporting elementary and secondary education?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Favor | 56.7 | |
| Oppose | 32.9 | |
| Don't know | 10.4 | |

One provision of KERA is that schools can be rewarded financially for increasing the number of successful students and punished if they do not improve. Do you believe that such rewards and punishments will lead to:

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Better schools | 40.7 | |
| No difference | 26.1 | |
| Worse schools | 18.6 | |
| Don't know | 14.6 | |

Some of the provisions of KERA increase the amount, cost and type of statewide testing, like having students write essays and do science experiments instead of taking multiple choice exams. Have you heard of these provisions?

| | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spr92 | Fall92 |
| Yes | 24.7 | 33.3 |
| No | 67.8 | 59.1 |
| Don't know | 7.5 | 7.6 |

Do you favor or oppose these changes in the type of statewide testing?

**Percentages**

| | Spr92 | | Fall92 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All respondents | Respondents familiar with new provisions | All respondents | Respondents familiar with new provisions |
| Favor | 57.3 | 72.4 | 61.0 | 75.8 |
| Oppose | 18.7 | 19.6 | 14.1 | 15.3 |
| Don't know | 24.0 | 8.0 | 24.7 | 8.8 |

Do you think that statewide testing of all students every year is:

**Percentages**

| | Spr92 | | Fall92 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All respondents | Respondents familiar with new provisions | All respondents | Respondents familiar with new provsions |
| Too much testing | 18.9 | 29.3 | 18.0 | 24.3 |
| An appropriate amount of testing | 55.2 | 57.3 | 55.1 | 61.2 |
| Too little testing | 13.6 | 9.1 | 12.8 | 10.3 |
| Don't know | 12.3 | 4.3 | 14.2 | 4.2 |